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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Management and Services

SUBJECT: Key Agency Positions and Assignments Thereto

REFERENCES: (a) ES/MC Memo dtd 22 Mar 73, Subject:  
Review of Key Assignments and Appointments

(b) ES/MC Memo dtd 19 Apr 73, Subject:  
Appointment of Senior Personnel to Key  
Assignments Outside Their Components

1. In references (a) and (b) above procedures were established to identify key Agency positions and to review assignments thereto. This memorandum is an amalgam of fact, opinion and judgment on those procedures and recommends changes intended to improve them.

2. The purpose of the key assignment program, at a minimum, appears to be to identify senior officers who have demonstrated exceptional skill in past assignments and who appear to have superior potential for more responsible tasks in the future. By broadening their perspective through a series of developmental assignments, the intent seems to be to ensure an abundant supply of highly-qualified, widely-experienced and rather recently refreshed officers to fill the Agency's senior substantitive and executive positions. Inevitably involving increased cross-Directorate assignment, this "wind of change" needs to be more widely and specifically articulated. Given the environment of almost totally decentralized personnel management to which our senior officers have been accustomed, we should not expect a ground swell of support nor be surprised by occasional evasive tactics. Years of conditioning by compartmentation, security, and parochialism will make the concept of identifying key positions and/or people for possible external consumption anathema to many managers.

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Likewise the individual employee, raised on the concept of career service, needs to know that although advancement is not precluded by a narrow career within a particular specialty, developmental and rotational assignments outside one's Directorate will be a prerequisite to consideration for senior management/executive assignment.

3. The present procedures appear either lacking or superfluous in several respects:

a. On Surfacing the Program

To date correspondence on the program has been limited to the Directorates and a few senior staffs and offices. The program concept is one that would be heartily endorsed and indeed viewed as long overdue by a majority of Agency personnel. Thus, it has considerable potential for public relations and employee morale purposes.

Recommendation

Announce the program in an Agency notice emphasizing its philosophy and purpose rather than the details and indicate that studies of similar applications for middle management and journeyman grades are underway, i.e., career service studies, etc.

b. On Identifying Key Positions

The present procedures require the preparation of extensive lists of key positions, the vast majority of which are currently filled and likely to remain so for an indefinite period.

Recommendation

For purposes of the key assignment program, all positions in the prescribed categories, viz., Office/ Division chiefs, their deputies, and chiefs and deputies of the next subordinate echelon (Divisions, Branches, Stations, as appropriate) should automatically be identified as a key position and no listings need be prepared.

c. On Availability of Assignments to Personnel from Other Components

The present procedures provide that "assignments open to personnel from other components will be noted." For the reasons cited in paragraph two above, the scope of the program will, in my judgment, be severely curtailed if the initial decision regarding the "openness" of positions is left to the discretion of the Office/Division managers.

Recommendation

Although the preference of the operating component regarding the selection of the individual assigned will be approved in the vast majority of cases, all positions should normally be "open" to other Office/Division personnel.

d. On Assignment Opportunities

"Assignment opportunities" is a complex subject. A true opportunity occurs only when an incumbent of a key position actually leaves the Agency either on a planned or unexpected basis or when new key positions are added to a Table of Organization. Other "opportunities" occur at end of tour or assignment periods but these normally involve an exchange of personnel still on the Agency rolls. Unless procedures for the key assignment program provide controls on the filling of both types of vacancies, the prospects for achieving the objective of the program will be slim, even nil. The quandary is that although these controls must not adversely affect the ability of the operating components to conduct their affairs, they must have sufficient force to ensure that the DCI's objectives are met. Advance planning is possible on key assignments resulting from scheduled retirements and new TO positions; for other cross-Directorate assignments a considerable degree of coordination and cooperation will be required of the respective Directorate career management officers.

Recommendation

The key assignment program manager should devise procedures which will permit the Directorates to exercise independent judgment on the filling of key positions per se, provided that within a calendar year they also meet whatever minimum quota of cross-Directorate assignments is established.

e. On Program Scope

Although I have ambivalent feelings about this one, it seems that component managers need to know what the DCI expects of the program in quantitative terms on an annual basis; it is likely that the program manager can manage program effectiveness quantitatively only if a quota is established.

Recommendation

A minimum quota should be established for cross-Directorate assignments based on a percentage of the number of key assignment positions in each Directorate.

f. On the Identification of Personnel

The success of the key assignment program will depend as much on the quality of the individuals involved as on the relevance of their experience to the new task at hand. Our present procedures set the selection criteria at "the top 20% of personnel in their categories." If the program is intended to develop a cadre for future leadership, we must include the best. I suspect that the principle of self-preservation will tend to prevail and the most promising people will not be put on the key assignment lists.

Recommendation

The key assignment personnel lists for each office should consist of the top two candidates for promotion to grades GS-14 through GS-18, the two officers most recently

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promoted to those grades, and as many other officers as an office chooses to nominate, provided they are in the top five percent of their respective categories.

g. On Employee Input

Present procedures fail to provide an ingredient essential, in my judgment, to the full success of the program, viz., the input of the employee. It is useful to know what those on the list would prefer by way of assignment, to permit the best match of officer and opportunity.

Recommendation

Acquire from officers on the key assignment list a statement, HRQ or otherwise, of assignment or category of activity preferences.

h. On Managing the Program

Every program needs a manager and this one probably more than others. Someone needs to collect and organize the data, identify opportunities, monitor compliance with the procedures, and evaluate and report on program effectiveness. The concept of "matchmaker" included in the present procedures seems both unnecessary and unwise.

Recommendation

That the Director of Personnel manage the key assignment program on behalf of the CIA Management Committee.

/s/ Charles A. Briggs

Charles A. Briggs  
Director of Planning,  
Programming, and Budgeting

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